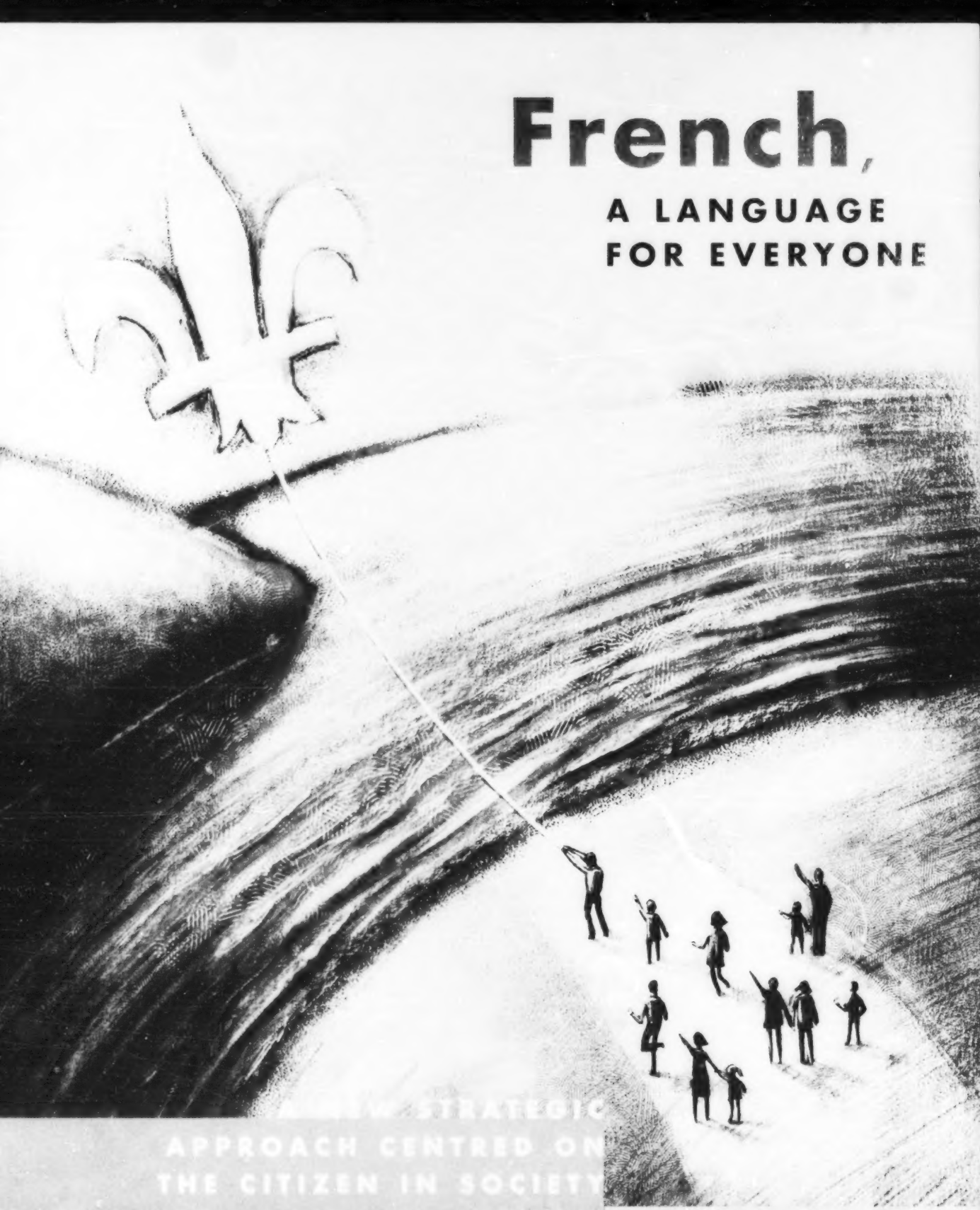
French,

A LANGUAGE FOR EVERYONE



A NEW STRATEGIC APPROACH CENTRED ON THE CITIZEN IN SOCIETY

SUMMARY OF THE FINAL REPORT

Québec

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French, a language for everyone

A new strategic approach centred on the citizen in society

Summary of the Final Report

Commission des États généraux sur la situation et l'avenir de la langue française au Québec

Summary of the Final Report[1]

Given the frequent consternation, passion and tension that the language question has always aroused in Québec, the remarkable maturity and very great serenity displayed in the numerous briefs, analyses and viewpoints and the extensive research received by the Commission des États généraux sur la situation et l'avenir de la langue française au Québec throughout its deliberations are reassuring from the standpoint of the future prospects of the French language in Québec and the enhancement of its culture. If there is one basic consensus that the Commission noted during its tour and public hearings, it is a very clear determination to maintain within Québec's territory in North America a welcoming, open, French-speaking nation. This determination reflects a growing worldwide trend toward cultural and linguistic diversity. At the outset, none of this was obvious. No one would have bet on the outcome of the Commission's deliberations and the public debate that took place. Now that the Commission has sounded out public opinion in Québec and accurately ascertained changes in Québec society, this consensus and many others are clearly evident.

Over the past year, the Commission examined numerous viewpoints, analyses and statements and the extensive research submitted. All of these contributions have revealed to what extent attitudes have changed. The Commission is thoroughly convinced that French, the official, common language, is a key component of cohesiveness in Québec society and that, more than ever, the language question must not be dealt with in a one-dimensional manner. Quebecers share a determination to work toward an inclusive social blueprint, create a common life space and lower the barriers that divide Québec society according to ethnic origin. To this end, the government must rely on a very clear, broad social consensus in favour of French. The French language in Québec can no longer be — if, indeed, it ever has been — the subject, first and foremost, of legislation or the unique preserve of a political party or a government agency. The Commission is convinced that the fate of French in Québec must, in the future, centre on the mobilization of Québec society as a whole.

1. A language policy centred on the individual citizen

The question has always been the same: how and on what footing can we anchor the future of the French language, adopted by a nation that accounts for only 2% of the population of North America? We cannot answer this question at the beginning of the 21st century without linking it to the language legislation adopted in the second half of the 20th century.

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[1] Only the final report, in French, signed by the commissioners, reflects the conclusions of the Commission des États généraux sur la situation et l'avenir de la langue française au Québec and the reader is invited to refer to it if need be.

Meeting the challenge

Following the *Act to Promote the French Language in Quebec* (Bill 63) adopted in 1969 and the first attempt to encourage more widespread use of French, the *Official Language Act* (Bill 22), adopted in 1974, marked the first genuine attempt by the Québec government to formulate a comprehensive policy linking the status and quality of the French language, which was declared the official language of Québec. A number of measures were adopted to make French the language of government, work, business and instruction. The universal freedom to choose the language of instruction was replaced by the obligation for all children, except certain categories of English-speaking children, to attend French-language schools. In 1977, with the adoption of the *Charter of the French language* (Bill 101), which is still the cornerstone of Québec's language policy, French became the official, common language of all Quebecers, regardless of origin. The legislation confirms the Québec government's respect for institutions in Québec's English-speaking community and also confirms the right of the Amerindians and the Inuit to maintain their ancestral languages and cultures. Moreover, the legislation stipulates that all children must attend French-language schools, except children one of whose parents is a Canadian citizen and who attended an English-language elementary school in Québec or Canada, since the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982 (without Québec's consent). By making French the language of government and the normal language of work, teaching, communications, commerce and business, the *Charter of the French language* sought to extend the use of the French language to all spheres of public life and thus broaden its power of attraction.

Twenty-four years later, Bill 101 has enabled Québec to make considerable progress in enhancing the status and attractiveness of the French language. Over 90% of young immigrants attend French-language schools. French is generally present in commerce and signs and its use is growing in businesses. Quebecers have acquired a form of security because French, the official, common language, has become more a part of everyday life.

However, this situation is not irreversible. The growing pressure that English is exerting in the global economy, mass culture, scientific research and the new technologies is engendering new problems. More widespread use of French in business is stagnating, bilingual signs are proliferating, and the use of educational materials in English in training institutions is rampant. Since the fragility of the French language is a structural given that will not vanish and Québec will continue to develop within North America, the linguistic challenges that we are facing today demand a new analysis and a search for new foundations.

Québec citizenship is a key

In recent decades, having modernized the machinery of government and mastered its economic, social and cultural development, Québec is now thoroughly examining its identity in order to assert itself in relation to the rest of Canada, North America and the world. This has led to the proposal for inclusive, and the resultant defining of a Québec citizenship that is now taking shape. Such citizenship is the outcome of centuries-old democratic values and reflects respect for others and is steeped in Québec culture and the French language and, while it has yet to be completely defined, it is focusing on the need of Quebecers to maintain their solidarity with one another and overcome the anonymity to which globalization is condemning small States. The notion of citizenship is not confined solely to the legal capacity to participate in the sharing of power but encompasses the broader meaning of belonging to a living heritage, centred on the sharing of common political and cultural references and on a shared identity. Québec's linguistic approach is civic because it makes the French language a factor of integration into and participation in society. Moreover, it acknowledges the historic and cultural contributions of all segments of society as an integral part of the Québec identity. This approach is perfectly in keeping with the situation in Québec. It confirms the preeminent place accorded French while recognizing the institutions of the English-speaking community and the First Nations.

This approach challenges the linguistic model that the federal government wishes to impose, i.e. the supposedly equal treatment of English and French, regardless of the actual asymmetry of the groups concerned and, in particular, Québec's specific nature, which has resulted in the illusion that English and French exert the same power of attraction. As we know, this is far from true. French-speakers are the majority in Québec but a very small minority in the rest of Canada. To the contrary, English-speakers, who form a minority in Québec, are a majority elsewhere in Canada and in North America, where English is the common language. In fact, Canada's bilingualism policy masks the absolute domination of English everywhere else in Canada, even among new immigrants who speak neither French nor English. In Québec, French fails, by far, to exert the same power of attraction in various spheres of activity and on new immigrants who speak neither French nor English.

Aware that they form an original nation that is constantly being enriched by immigrants and by those who are already here, the people of Québec have acquired the conviction that the French language is no longer the exclusive preserve of the majority. Indeed, French belongs to everyone and this observation will continue to be true in the future. In Québec, equal opportunities start with the French language. Anyone living in Québec, regardless of origin, receives as part of his heritage the official, common language of Québec. Thus, French becomes the special means of accessing Quebecers' common civic heritage, the focal point of the development of Québec society's values, and a

rallying point for all Quebecers, which emphasizes the host society's responsibility to integrate immigrants into all facets of public activity. In order to ensure social justice, the government must enable citizens to assume their responsibilities through general education, civic education, the promotion and protection of French, and the mastery by all Quebecers of the language.

The strength of a common, open culture

Québec culture is naturally at the heart of the Québec identity and, consequently, Québec citizenship, since it encompasses the entire range of values, knowledge and institutions of the Québec people that symbols, activities and original artistic, intellectual and material output convey. Indeed, citizenship can be perceived as an explicit recognition of belonging to a nation, a community of individuals who choose to live together and share a common culture. The Québec nation is abandoning the defensive stance of minority peoples, rejecting the divisive, ethnic nature of multiculturalism and relying increasingly on the potential to rally society around a common culture stemming from the creativity of each of its members in order to broaden an awareness throughout society of the collective benefits of sharing the same citizenship.

Growing recognition by all segments of Québec society, especially the English-speaking community, of French as the official, common language affords our society a greater degree of security. Québec must take advantage of this opportunity to examine the historic cultural contributions that have made Québec what it is today.

Numerous statements heard by the Commission suggest that, with few exceptions, Québec's English-speaking community now regards itself as a stakeholder in the confirmation of French as the language of participation in Québec society and its members identify themselves as citizens of Québec. Increasingly, the growing influence of Québec's culture, language and institutions is perceived as a facet of Québec culture rather than a source of competition in respect of the French language. This situation stems from the worldwide shift in the focal point of pressure by the English language on French and all other languages, but also from a generational changing of the guard that is mitigating ethnolinguistic barriers. The English-speaking community may be the best buffer between Québec and the rest of North America since its language is spoken by all of Québec's neighbours. Its contribution to Québec must be more widely acknowledged, better used and considered more widely as a means of broadening Québec's influence through North America.

Of all of the provinces, Québec's legislative framework is the most favourable to native languages and is also more progressive. It is essential to continue to recognize that the Amerindian and Inuit nations have helped fashion the Québec identity and that their members are full-fledged citizens of Québec. Québec cannot claim to develop its North American character without revising its cultural relations with the aboriginal nations, the first occupants of its territory. In this spirit, the Commission hopes that conditions will be introduced geared to collaboration between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples that is egalitarian and mindful of each group's jurisdiction.

Replace the ethnic approach with a civic approach

Among other things, the Commission recommends that Québec's language policy make a permanent break with the historic Canadian approach that divides Québec identity along French-Canadian and English-Canadian lines and replace it with a civic approach that bases the identity of the Québec people on reception and inclusion through a common language, French, and on a common culture encompassing contributions from all segments of Québec society. In this spirit, the Commission also recommends that Québec citizenship be officially and formally instituted and its acquisition by immigrants be officially announced in order to reflect Quebecers' attachment to the entire array of institutions and heritage and democratic values that they share. Moreover, the Commission recommends that the French language not only be declared the language through which such citizenship is exercised but also that it be recognized as a language whose mastery is a basic right. The Commission also recommends that all facets of Québec culture be recognized, especially its historic components, the English-speaking community, and the Amerindian and Inuit nations, and that the State and its institutions foster the development of bridges between the various components of this heritage.

2. Confirm the constitutional nature of the principles underlying the language policy

Québec is the only territory in North American where French is the common language. Furthermore, it is the only place in North America where the French language can rely on a constitutional state that protects it while recognizing the rights of its English-speaking community and those of the Amerindian and Inuit nations. It is hardly surprising that Quebecers regard the *Charter of the French language* as a basic law.

With the application of this act, a new balance has been struck in Québec society and a shared vision is now, more than ever, within reach. This vision centres on the recognition that the French language is a basic trait of Québec's cultural and linguistic heritage and the means of gaining access to the common culture and

participating in its development. This vision also focuses on the recognition of the participation and historic contribution of an English-speaking community and the Amerindian and Inuit nations in the elaboration of Québec's identity, culture and institutions. Consequently, English, the Amerindian languages an Inuktitut must each have their place in the life and life space of Québec since they are essential components of Quebecers' cultural and linguistic heritage.

The Commission believes that the time has come to incorporate this common vision into legal standards that would take precedence over other Québec statutes. It is of the opinion that it would be advantageous for several reasons to enshrine in a constitution the underlying principles of Québec's language policy. Such a move would confirm the notion that all facets of the French language and Québec culture are at the heart of the Quebecers' national will to live and may not be subjected to the vagaries of partisan politics. Moreover, a comprehensive language policy whose linguistic principles were entrenched in a constitution would not be subject to the adverse effects of legislation, regulations or government policy, thus preventing the left hand from undoing what the right hand has done. The Commission is convinced that the enshrinement in a constitution of the underlying principles of a comprehensive language policy would be a good way to settle the existing conflict between the individual rights of Quebecers and language legislation. The conflict arises, in particular, because the supralegislative status of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* means that it takes precedence over the *Charter of the French language*.

The Commission has examined three avenues to entrenching in a constitution the underlying principles of Québec's language policy: the inclusion of these principles in a Québec Constitution, their incorporation into a text that is already of a supralegislative nature and possesses a quasi-constitutional status, such as the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, or the incorporation into the *Charter of the French language* of provisions that confer on the principles a supralegislative character and thus a quasi-constitutional status. The Commission is advocating the third solution in the short term.

Thus, the Commission recommends including in the *Charter of the French language,* by granting them a supralegislative status, the principles governing the place accorded languages in public places and public life along with the constitutional rights in the realm of education of Québec's English-speaking community and the Inuit and Amerindian nations. It also recommends including in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* the basic right to learn French, in keeping with the rights already included in the Charter.

More specifically, the Commission recommends that the constitutional nature be recognized of the following legal norms:

French is the official language of Québec and, as such, it is the language of the government and the language of instruction in the public school system. Moreover, all official documents and legal writings must exist in this language.

In Québec, French is the common language of public life and public places and, as such, it must be the usual language in public life and public places, especially the workplace, commerce and business, and the activities of legal entities.

English, Inuktitut and the aboriginal languages also have their place in public life and public places, in harmony with the official, common language.

These provisions are intended to guarantee the pre-eminence of French, the official, common language.

The Commission also recommends that constitutional protection be accorded to the provisions in the *Charter of the French language* concerning access to English-language schools and the use of Amerindian languages or Inuktitut as languages of instruction among the Amerindians and Inuit. Moreover, it recommends that the learning of French, the official, common language, be guaranteed by the Québec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* in the same way as other economic and social rights are guaranteed.

3. Ensure the mastery of French in a pluralistic linguistic environment

Since linguistic and geographic mobility will continue to grow in the developed economies throughout the 21st century, Quebecers will be required, more than ever in their history, to master languages. This means French, first and foremost, which confers on the Québec nation its originality and identity in North America. Second, it includes English, spoken by a sizeable Québec community, the rest of Canada, and the United States, which is spurring sweeping changes the world over as the century begins. Many Quebecers will undoubtedly have to learn at least a third language, probably Spanish or Portuguese, in response to the impending establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

To a large extent, the Québec government must rely on the Québec education system and the continuity of provisions on the language of instruction in the *Charter of the French language* to ensure the survival of French and create the foundations of citizenship that is open to the world. French must remain the language of instruction in kindergartens and elementary and secondary schools in the public education system and no constitutional drift should be allowed to breach this general principle. Individuals will still be free to choose their language of instruction in Cegeps and universities.

Ensure mastery of the French language

Province-wide and regional hearings and presentations made by specialists during thematic days revealed that the public has great expectations with respect to the teaching of French and that Quebecers are more keenly vigilant. Students, parents, teachers, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation and key stakeholders in society at large representing all segments of society are demanding that the schools teach French better and enable students to acquire a sound knowledge of the linguistic code, i.e. spelling and grammar, an essential tool for mastery of the language. The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation maintains that the mastery of French is crucial both as a factor in academic success and social and occupational integration and as a means of participating actively, freely and responsibly in public life.

Many interveners believe that Québec's French-language and English-language public schools poorly assume their responsibility to ensure a mastery of spoken and written French. The results of French tests from elementary school to university appear to confirm this observation. The Commission deems the persistence throughout the education system of shortcomings in French, especially from the standpoint of the linguistic code, to be unacceptable. The teaching of French is now trapped in a vicious circle in which ignorance of the French language is transmitted from one level of education to the next. It handicaps students in the pursuit and successful completion of their studies. This system has now reached the very teachers who teach the language in the schools.

Among other things, the Commission recommends that the linguistic code, in conjunction with the other skills indicated in the curriculum and in a teaching approach centred on the transmission of knowledge, be properly taught. Moreover, it recommends that a precise academic development plan be elaborated linking all levels of education through which it is possible to monitor from one level to the next each student's progress in an individual file, detect his weaknesses and remedy them as quickly as possible. In order to break down this vicious circle, the Commission recommends that at each level of elementary and secondary school the acquisition of knowledge in French be formally verified in keeping with the objectives defined in respect of each of these stages. Failure should set in motion a catching-up process that entitles the student to repeat the course in order to advance to the next level. A series of support measures for teaching staff and students accompany these recommendations.

Institutional policy and teacher training

Since French is everyone's concern, certain institutions are called upon to play a key role in promoting the language. Given the strategic role that they assume in teaching, the mastery of, advanced training in and the use of the French language, the ministère de l'Éducation and Québec educational institutions from kindergarten to university must take the lead by being the first to adopt an institutional language policy, which, in each establishment, affords an opportunity to become fully aware of the objectives of Québec's language policy and provisions in the *Charter of the French language* and to clarify their scope in the institution's day-to-day operations.

Teacher training is undoubtedly one key factor in the reform to be undertaken. The Commission is of the opinion that we must give priority to acting at all levels in the teacher training process and in supporting teachers in the classroom. As for future teachers in the French-language education system, the Commission believes that a uniform province-wide exam should confirm their knowledge of spoken and written French, including their knowledge of the linguistic code.

The English-language school system

The language, culture and institutions of Québec's English-speaking community have always been recognized and respected. To contribute fully to the development of Québec society and influence its development, members of this community are entitled to demand that their network of school boards ensures mastery of the official, common language by allowing students to enter the cultural universe underpinning it. The question is one of social justice and affords a means of fully integrating and contributing to life in Québec.

Various studies and analyses submitted to the Commission reveal a marked increase in the bilingualism rate with respect to the spoken language among young members of the English-speaking community, who are better equipped than their elders to participate fully in Québec society. In 25 years, the bilingualism rate in this community has risen from 37% to 63%. This is a tangible, appreciable gain and a genuine advance toward greater linguistic openness and greater social cohesion. A number of young English-speakers complain, however that they have not been adequately educated in the French language, that their teaching focuses above all on learning the spoken language and attaches too little importance to the written language and the culture that the French language conveys in Québec. They say that they are ill prepared to enter the workplace because of their limited skills in written French.

The exodus of young graduates to seek employment elsewhere, encouraged because of their insufficient knowledge of the written language, is intolerable. We must ensure that students better master written French as doing so will facilitate their integration into the labour market and their active participation in Québec society. By assigning the teaching of French to individuals who have received training in the teaching of second languages, who master the French language and who are familiar with the French-speaking community, we can create an appropriate environment that enables young English-speaking students to become familiar very early on with the French language and Québec culture. Exchanges with French-language schools and cultural institutions must be encouraged and perceived as a means of participating fully in Québec society through a mastery of the official, common language.

Instruction in English in elementary and secondary schools

The specialists who presented their findings to the Commission are unanimous on two points: the mother tongue must be sufficiently mastered, especially the written language, before a second language is taught and it is unrealistic to believe that a child can become perfectly bilingual upon completion of his compulsory education. In most instances, he will be functionally bilingual. The Commission recommends replacing the teaching of English as a second language starting in elementary school with a strategy to arouse interest among children in second languages and, and in the last cycle of elementary school and the middle and last cycle of secondary school, with concerted instruction accompanied by the creation of an English-language cultural environment and at least twice as many hours of instruction as is the case under the current reform. The Commission naturally recommends that instruction in English be assigned to individuals who master the language and have received training in teaching second languages. Furthermore, the Commission recommends that the teaching of a third language, entrusted to competent instructors, be introduced gradually starting in secondary school and continuously until the end of Cegep studies.

Advanced linguistic training in the Cegeps

The Commission believes that the Cegeps must play a decisive role from the standpoint of language and the confirmation of the citizen's role. Until now, in order to attain their personal linguistic goals, a number of young people and adults have opted to attend a Cegep in which the language of instruction, whether English or French, is that in which they wish to perfect their skills. We must acknowledge the widespread desire to achieve language skills and underscore the widespread exchanges between Cegeps that reflect the desire among students to upgrade their skills. A mastery of French is especially important among students in the English-language and French-language technical sectors. Upon completion of their studies, such students must have

acquired French vocabulary in their fields. The Commission sees in this process an essential condition for the francization of businesses.

In a broader context, why should not Québec Cegeps, in keeping with the image of the Québec of the future, become a place in which to master French, further develop skills in English and a third language, be a focal point for fermentation in all facets of Québec culture and a forum for all citizens, regardless of origin, affinity or allegiance? The Cegeps offer a remarkable opportunity to create a new linguistic and cultural hub that is open to the world. The development of a Québec culture would be all the richer since students from the French-language and English-language school systems would share a common centre for knowledge and culture that opens a window on the world.

First, it would be crucial to oblige all Cegeps to adopt an institutional language policy, both as employers and educational institutions. In French-language Cegeps, such a measure would confirm the status of French as the preeminent language of instruction for all instructors, the language of extracurricular activities, and the working language for all staff. In English-language Cegeps, it would promote the notion of French as the common, working language in Québec society.

In this spirit, it is important, for example, that the availability of the French versions of software be mandatory for technical instruction in French-language Cegeps and that students in English-language Cegeps be prepared to use French as the working language in computing.

Furthermore, it would be advisable for the Cegeps to establish an optional program for students wishing to obtain more advanced second language training, i.e. English for French-speakers and French for English-speakers. In addition to the two second-language courses that are now compulsory, this new program would offer two additional optional second-language courses and two other optional basic courses offered in the second language, bearing in mind the second language skills that students acquire upon completion of secondary school. The same type of program should exist in other languages, especially Spanish for students who believe that they have a solid knowledge of English or French as a second language.

Special responsibilities

It is incumbent upon the French-language Cegeps to verify the language skills of students upon completion of Cegep programs (mastery of standard spoken and written French and a knowledge of specialized vocabulary in the realm of technical instruction), make provision for catching-up procedures for students who fail, demand success in the examination as a condition for obtaining the Diploma of Collegial Studies (DCS) or the Attestation of Collegial Studies (ACS), and support students who speak a language other than French.

Moreover, it is incumbent upon the English-language Cegeps to pursue instruction in written French and to incorporate into technical instruction knowledge of French terminology. The Cegeps must ensure that students master standard spoken and written French and learn specialized vocabulary in the realm of technical instruction. They must also foster, in conjunction with instruction in French, contact with the French-speaking community and ensure, at the same time, that such contact provides an opening and an initiation to the culture expressed through the French language.

Universities bolster the Québec identity

The universities are a showcase for the transmission, production and dissemination of knowledge and are playing a key role in the development of Québec society. They can display leadership by confirming the French character of Québec society, especially by ensuring that their students have knowledge of quality, standard language and French terminology in various disciplines. Such excellence must rely on a policy governing the mastery and quality of the French language formulated in each university that specifies the responsibilities of lecturers, support staff and administrators in all facets of university life. Furthermore, the universities must ensure that students know and are able to use a quality, standard language and French terminology in various disciplines.

To enable the universities to fully assume the basic mandate of contributing to the production and dissemination of knowledge in French and broadening the influence of such knowledge, the Commission recommends that the universities be integrated into the public administration, as defined in the appendix to the *Charter of the French language*.

French-language universities

The presence of English in French-language universities is increasing. Very keen competition at the national and international levels is spurring the universities to create and offer tailor-made programs in languages other than French, especially in English. Moreover, English is becoming increasingly pervasive in the production and dissemination of scientific research. While international scientific exchanges between experts justify the use of the common language of the sciences, the situation is entirely different from the standpoint of training students. A growing trend is apparent in Québec, where French-speaking universities are beginning to offer programs in English in certain disciplines. The textbooks and software used in conjunction with university courses are very often in English. In certain laboratories and research centres, English is used as the working language in order to accommodate guest researchers.

While other languages of instruction can be used at the master's and doctoral levels, undergraduate students must be trained in French to enable them to conceptualize knowledge in this language. To this end, the Commission believes that it is essential for the universities to clarify in their institutional language policies recourse to English in teaching, laboratories and research centres, in textbooks and the accompanying educational materials, and in the dissemination of new knowledge. Students are entitled to receive instruction in French and to learn to create and express their ideas in this language.

English-language universities

English-language universities also play an important role in confirming Québec's French character and in consolidating the Québec identity. They must ensure that their graduates have the best possible mastery of the official, common language so that they can easily enter the labour market and occupy in Québec society strategic positions in keeping with their post-secondary training. To this end, the English-language universities must pursue the teaching of written French and integrate into occupational training a knowledge of French terminology. In order to participate in all spheres of scientific, economic, social and cultural life, graduates of the English-language universities must know French and the relevant terminology in their fields of specialization, where relevant.

Circumventing the law through non-subsidized private schools

Over the past five years, enrolment has climbed steadily in non-subsidized private English-language schools. Such growth stems primarily from the decision by parents to enrol their children for one, two or three years so that they can then attend English-language public schools, thus circumventing the general principle of elementary and secondary instruction in French stipulated in the *Charter of the French language*. The Commission recommends that the Québec government take the necessary steps to ensure scrupulous compliance with the general principle of elementary and secondary instruction in French. To this end, parents residing in Québec must neither be entitled nor allowed to buy for their children and their descendants the constitutional right to receive in Québec instruction in English in a public school or a subsidized private school after attending, often for a short time, a non-subsidized private school offering instruction in English in Québec or Canada. The Commission hopes that this perverse effect of section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, adopted without Québec's consent, will be challenged by all possible means, including, if need be, a constitutional amendment shielding Québec from this provision.

Learning and mastery by recent immigrants of the common language

The intensification of immigration is raising for Québec the ongoing challenge of offering recent immigrants and their children an opportunity to fully master the French language. In order to feel at home in Québec, they must first feel at ease with the French language, an essential tool for integration, the acquisition of knowledge, work, culture and citizenship. All new arrivals in Québec are entitled to receive language training that allows them to learn the common language and thus participate fully in public life. The Québec government has already implemented a series of measures aimed at facilitating the linguistic integration into Québec society of new arrivals.

The Commission recommends that the appropriate steps be taken to ensure that children learn French in early childhood centres, welcoming classes, and during summer holidays, in close association with families. As for newly arrived adults, the Commission deems it preferable for language training to take place in the workplace, without overlooking immigrant women who remain in the home, in collaboration with the school boards and community agencies.

Recognize Québec Sign Language

Given that the United Nations recommends that natural signed languages play a leading role in training programs for deaf children and that, at the international level, national variations of sign language are recognized in Sweden, Denmark, France, Belgium and by all of the American states (in Canada, Manitoba and Alberta recognize American Sign Language), the Commission recommends that the Québec government recognize Québec Sign Language as the first language of the deaf in Québec and that the ministère de l'Éducation recognize QSL as a language of instruction.

4. A sweeping initiative to link the status and quality of the language

In a world where oral and written communication is closely linked to knowledge, a policy to promote the French language now seems essential. More than ever, the status of the language depends on our determination to promote in Québec quality French, which, while taking into account our specific traits, reflects the international standard. That is the condition for Quebecers' being proud of their language, encouraging others to speak it and contributing to the worldwide linguistic and cultural heritage a quality language that reflects conditions in North America.

The Commission advocates the promotion of French and the enhancement of the quality of the language through a comprehensive linguistic development plan in Québec that links the status and quality of the language. The plan focuses on three key objectives, i.e. to be full-fledged French-speakers; to officially recognize our linguistic and cultural diversity and recognize the standard French used in Québec; and to describe and disseminate French.

All of the big nations have described word use and assembled such descriptions in a common dictionary, e.g. European countries such as France and Spain, but also the United States, Mexico and Brazil. The Commission is of the opinion that Québec has reached this stage in its development. French in Québec has developed over the centuries on a new continent and has become a separate variety of the source language. The words and meanings created here, which are part of Quebecers' legitimate linguistic heritage, must be recognized and accurately defined. The same is true of words from other territories in the French-speaking countries and communities.

Among other things, the Commission recommends that the policy to promote the standard French in use in Québec also foster the elaboration, structuring and dissemination of a linguistic standard that reconciles respect for the French language as it is spoken by other French-speakers and Francophiles and the legitimacy of specific uses of the French language in Québec. Moreover, the Commission recommends the implementation of linguistic services that are accessible free of charge to all Quebecers and that such services be incorporated and disseminated in conjunction with a permanent campaign to promote the French language.

The key role played by the government, communicators, businesses and associations

The government must serve as a driving force in promoting the French language by illustrating in all of its spoken and written communications what is quality French in Québec. Moreover, it must support the application of language legislation through its purchasing power and authority to subsidize and regulate. It must also take into account the promotion and future of the language when the policies and regulations adopted by each government department and agency are defined.

Similarly, the media and advertising agencies must develop, illustrate and promote quality French in their operations and professional productions, in keeping with the Québec standard. They should make known the criteria they intend to respect and take the necessary steps to support the use by their staff of quality language.

Businesses have a special responsibility to employ French terminology in the workplace and in written and spoken communications with their employees. Furthermore, businesses must recognize their special responsibility concerning the dissemination of French technical vocabulary, which is at once a question of respect and employee safety. As for associations, they must use quality language in their dealings with their members and the public. If need be, in the case of teachers, journalists and so on, associations should actively promote the importance of the quality of language.

5. French, the language of everyday life

The *Charter of the French language* seeks to make French the normal, usual working language in Québec. It gives all workers the right to work in French in businesses of all sizes. The past 25 years have shown that it is possible to successfully create, manufacture, manage, trade and, in a word, work and do business in French in Québec. A new sociolinguistic balance has been struck in a relatively calm manner. The new social and economic conditions that are appearing against a backdrop of globalization can upset this balance and raise fears that the accomplishments of recent years will be lost. Québec society is able to face these new challenges. However, to maintain the same objective, i.e. to ensure that French is the language of everyday life, bearing in mind the new rules of the game, it must review its strategies.

New strategies concerning francization in the workplace

The value and prestige of the French language in Québec depends on its use in everyday life, especially in the workplace. Over the past quarter century, francization in the workplace has advanced remarkably, but since 1998, globalization, which is upsetting the organizational and operating methods of businesses, has caused a levelling off in respect of compliance with legislation.

The sectoral approach

The Commission believes that, in addition to ensuring individualized support for businesses as is now the case, we must adopt a sectoral approach in each economic sector. Such an approach will make it possible to pinpoint the distinctive traits of each sector, and pool experience, means, resources and costs stemming, for example, from the elaboration of a sectoral terminology. Broadly speaking, the sectoral approach will rely on solidarity among businesses in a given sector to encourage emulation and joint problem-solving from the standpoint of francization.

Sectoral measures also imply the establishment of a partnership that must include, in addition to representatives of the agency responsible for administering the *Charter of the French language*, representatives of businesses of various sizes. The outcome of their deliberations can then be used by all businesses in a given sector and by self-employed workers in the sector.

One task of the sectoral francization committees will be to clarify what it means to work in French in a specific area of concentration. For example, linguistic requirements may be different in the tourism sector from those in the logging industry or the aeronautics industry, especially because of differences in each sector's mission, clientele, external and internal communications, technological tools, and so on. Once each sector's characteristics and needs have been clarified, the francization program must be adapted to the specific situation of each business.

Joint francization committees

The *Charter of the French language* stipulates that businesses with 100 or more employees must establish a francization committee, which assumes the role of key agent in the francization of businesses. Unfortunately, a very small percentage of these committees are active. The Commission believes that the committees should be strengthened. In addition to their current mandates, they should be responsible for ensuring the quality of the French language in the workplace and give opinions on linguistic requirements other than those pertaining to the French language. The committees must be made up of representatives of employers and employees and have at least four members. Employee associations or all of the employees of a given business must appoint employee representatives. The agency responsible for administering the *Charter of the French language* must integrate into its comprehensive workplace strategy the ongoing training of members of the francization committees, if possible by sector.

The language used in the health and social services network

Among the various concerns of Québec's English-speaking community, the most striking one is unquestionably the issue of access to health and social services provided in English, although services in English are widely available. There are few complaints concerning the language in which such services are provided. English-speakers and French-speakers alike, who claim to have experienced difficulty in obtaining health care services in their language, lodge such complaints, because the health care system itself has undergone tremendous change. The problem does not stem from a genuine lack of access to services provided in English but from the manner in which provisions governing the language in which services are delivered have been applied. The main problem arises from an administrative directive issued in August 1994, which introduced

the notion of bilingual positions as a means of guaranteeing access to services offered in English. This directive has served to focus on a major issue. By linking services provided in English to the bilingual nature of the position, the directive provokes a conflict between two rights, recognized by two different statutes, i.e. the right to work in French guaranteed by the *Charter of the French language* and the right of English-speakers to receive health care and services in English guaranteed by the *Act respecting health services and social services*. Moreover, the directive has led to the proliferation of bilingual positions, often above and beyond what the number of English-speakers in a region demands. The bilingualism requirement has, therefore, become widespread in the network, thus contradicting the spirit of the *Act respecting health services and social services* and the *Charter of the French language*.

Service delivery based on professionalism is the solution

We must now extricate ourselves from this dilemma that arises because French is the working language and, at the same time, ensure that the English-speaking community has access to services in its language. We must reconcile the delivery of services in English, when necessary, with the objectives of Québec's language policy, especially the right to work in French. While the professional staff in health and social services establishments is usually bilingual and committed to serving its English-language clients, we feel that there is no need for a systematic bilingualization of positions in the sector.

The Commission is convinced that the delivery of services in English, as in a language other than French, depends on the quality and efficiency of the service provided by a professional to a specific person and has nothing to do with the bilingual nature of the position that the professional occupies. If there is one field in which Québec has always displayed considerable openness and great professionalism, it is in satisfying the expectations of the English-speaking community in the realm of health and social services. Indeed, until now, the English-speaking community has shown itself to be highly satisfied in this respect. Establishments should guarantee the presence of qualified staff to satisfy the needs of English-speaking patients not by making positions bilingual but by making the necessary administrative adjustments.

Respect for consumers

Provisions in the *Charter of the French language* governing the marketing of products are often contravened. French-speaking consumers are faced with products from which French is absent or are placed in the uncomfortable position of having to ask for instructions written in French or making do with instructions written in imprecise, poor, often incomprehensible French. The increase in imported goods explains, to a large extent, why growing numbers of products offered on the Québec market do not comply with the legislation. This situation is

especially apparent in the food sector. A number of foreign exporters and importers in Canada are unaware of or do not acknowledge the existence of a French-language market in the northeastern portion of North America.

The Commission is of the opinion that the agency responsible for administering the *Charter of the French language*, in collaboration with distributors and importers, must regularly engage in awareness and information campaigns aimed at foreign manufacturers so that they understand and comply with the linguistic demands of the Québec market. Furthermore, agreements such as NAFTA and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) must include provisions respecting the language of trade and business that make obligatory the use of the Americas' four languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French) to market all common consumer goods. The most economical solution is to design and manufacture multilingual packaging and write from the outset documentation and instructions in several languages, as many businesses do for the NAFTA market.

French in signs and advertising

The linguistic landscape of a State or territory reflects the soul and values of the people who inhabit it. The validity of ensuring Québec's essential French character was frequently mentioned during the Commission's regional and province-wide hearings. However, the proliferation of company names in English, often under the banner of chain stores, e.g. Music World or Future Shop, give the impression that commercial signs in Québec are becoming anglicized. Indeed, the problem of the display of trademarks gives rise to national and international laws and arises in all countries.

In this area in particular, the Commission believes that in its international relations and in its discussions with the Government of Canada, Québec must ask that international agreements governing trademarks be revised so that they respect national languages and the cultural and linguistic diversity of countries. Failing prompt revision of these agreements, the Commission proposes that a sustained effort be made to encourage businesses and merchants to voluntarily ensure the French character of company names, either by modifying the names or accompanying company names or trademarks with French wording. We must convince businesses that it is in their interests to adopt names in French, the common language of the people whose business they hope to obtain.

The Commission is of the opinion that the clear predominance of French in public signs and advertising should become widespread. The federal government, too, must comply with and apply the principle of the clear predominance of French in Québec. Moreover, the Commission has also adopted a recommendation of the Conseil de la langue française calling for the establishment of a Regroupement pour l'usage du français dans l'affichage commercial made up of representatives

of the business community, consumers, admen and the government departments concerned, e.g. Industrie et Commerce, Culture, Tourisme, and the Inspector General of Financial Institutions. The agency responsible for administering the *Charter of the French language* must take the initiative to establish the group and help it to formulate and implement proactive strategies respecting awareness and francization in various milieus.

6. French and the new technologies

Since the microcomputer revolution, especially the advent of personal computers and the Internet, information and communications technologies have become pervasive in all spheres of human activity, as much in the public domain, e.g. the business community, government, education and scientific research, as in private life. In Québec, the widespread use of microcomputers and information and communications technologies, above all the Internet, are affecting competition between the French and English languages. By increasing opportunities to use English, in particular through trade or technical and scientific communications, microcomputing is increasing the pressure that English exercises on French and jeopardizing provisions in language legislation aimed at making French the main language of work, commerce and business. Microcomputing is also entering the education sector both as a subject and a teaching aid. The government must react and adopt an action plan in this field, especially with respect to the Internet. Québec must appropriate the Internet in French, i.e. not only make use of it but also create content and Web sites in French. Countries where other languages are spoken are doing so and the safeguarding and development of the future cultural and linguistic diversity of the world depend on it.

Trade in computer-related products

The *Charter of the French language* imposes minimal requirements to make computer-related products as readily available in French as they are in English in the same stores. This minimum requirement must be enhanced to increase the supply of products in French through a policy to promote the creation and marketing of products in French, either through the translation and adaptation of products now available solely in English, or through the design in French of original products.

Furthermore, the agency responsible for administering the *Charter of the French language* must include in its francization strategy a concern for properly informing consumers about the products, software and game software available in French. In a broader context, the Québec government must pay particular attention to the allocation of its resources in order to foster research, the creation and marketing of computer-related products in French, and the creation of French-language content and Web sites.

E-commerce

The strategic importance to businesses big and small of virtual space is growing. The Internet allows a business to make itself, the nature of its operations and its range of products and services known, seek customers, conduct commercial transactions, and so on.

French-speaking consumers are entitled to know what they are purchasing and under what conditions and Québec consumer protection legislation must apply to E-commerce transactions. Québec can apply its legislation, including language legislation, to sites operated by Québec businesses by demanding the use of French on Québec commercial Web sites, without excluding the use of English or other languages.

Computing in vocational and technical training

The use of computing and its numerous applications in all sectors of working life is growing in occupational and technical training both in the Cegeps and the universities. Penetration by computing in schools, Cegeps and universities should favour French. Since this market represents a high volume of computer and software purchases, it could foster and increase demand for French-language computer-related products. Moreover, when young people learn to work with computer-related products in French, they are learning to work in French.

The problem of computing in French in the vocational and technical sectors appears as a vicious circle that must be broken: the language used in the software selected in vocational and technical training courses has an influence on the working language, but, to the contrary, the language of software used in the workplace significantly influences the choice of the language used in the software being taught. There is only one way to stop dragging our feet and that is to address both issues simultaneously, i.e. to teach in French and promote in the workplace the use of computer-related products in French.

As for instruction at the secondary, Cegep and university levels, the Commission recommends making compulsory all aspects of computer training in French, i.e. terminology, computer operating systems, and French-language applications software when available, in all subsidized French-language institutions. English-language educational institutions must introduce their students to computing in French to facilitate their integration into the French-language labour market. The ministère de l'Éducation must adopt the necessary measures in this respect.

7. Solidarity in the French-speaking nations and the international community

The future of the French language concerns not only Québec but also all of the French-speaking nations and the French-speaking communities in North America. In order to contribute to the vitality and promotion of French, Québec must establish new ties with the Acadian people and French-speakers in Canada and the United States. It must also establish closer, more productive ties with all of the other French-speaking nations, not just France and Belgium.

In a broader context, the future of the French language requires the implementation of innovative strategies to ensure respect for linguistic and cultural diversity in the world. It is in the interests of Québec and the French-speaking countries to join with other linguistic communities that are defending such cultural diversity and fighting to maintain their national languages.

French-speaking communities in North America

Historically, the French language and the Catholic faith were the key factors of integration and cohesiveness in French-speaking communities in Canada. Starting in the 1960s, French-speakers developed differently. The rise of Québec nationalism, the secularization of society, the broader role played by the State, and the affirmation of regionalism throughout Canada have differentiated the Canadian, Acadian and Québec French-speaking communities. However, we must now create new solidarity between Québec, Acadia and the Canadian and American communities while respecting the specific nature and differences of each one.

There are now roughly 1 million French-speakers living outside Québec in Canada. Of this number, half live in Ontario and one quarter in New Brunswick and only 600 000 speak French in the home.

Acadia is the oldest French-speaking settlement in North America. It was founded in 1604, four years before the foundation of Québec City. The largest group of French-speaking Acadians, approximately 225 000 in number, is found in northern and central New Brunswick and accounts for one third of the province's population.

The situation of other French-speakers in Canada is more precarious than that of the New Brunswick Acadians. While the assimilation rate in this province is 8%, it stands at 39% in Ontario, 53% in Manitoba, 71% in Saskatchewan, and 68% in Alberta.

French-speakers and Francophiles are found in the United States. The Cajuns, i.e. the descendants of the Acadians who were deported to Louisiana, and the descendants of Quebecers who immigrated to the United States, share French origins. Other French-speakers live in the United States in order to work or study, not to mention numerous public figures, university lecturers, senior civil servants, senators and state governors who are interested in Québec.

The Commission recommends that by recognizing the diversity of the socio-political contexts of the peoples and French-speakers of North America, Québec establish solidarity with them on the same footing as in its relations with the French-speaking countries the world over, i.e. from the standpoint of mutual interest in learning and broadening the influence of the French language. In this spirit, the Commission also recommends that Québec rely, first and foremost, on organizations in the private sector, the education system and cultural institutions, and the leaders of the Acadian people and the French-speaking communities.

The French-speaking countries

At the international level, the economic development and linguistic status of the French-speaking countries vary greatly. Some countries are highly developed, especially in Europe and the Americas, while other nations in the southern hemisphere are underdeveloped or even very poor. Despite the diversity of the French-speaking nations, there is a common determination to ensure the development of member countries, respect cultural diversity and promote French as an international language.

The status of French in Europe is worrisome

The Commission notes that the status of French in Europe is worrisome. The weakening of the language's status, a reduction in its use in France as the language of commerce and business and the working language at all levels of the hierarchy risk tarnishing its prestige and diminishing its value and, consequently, adversely affecting the status of French in Québec. Above all, French must not lose its status as a modern language adapted to development and a means of participating in international exchanges in all areas.

The Commission therefore recommends that the Québec government, in collaboration, in particular, with France, elaborate a strategy to ensure the maintenance and broadening of the influence of the French language in the world, especially in international agencies, businesses and forums. Furthermore, since education is essential for the future of the French-speaking countries, the Commission recommends that Québec propose to the countries of the northern hemisphere that they launch in collaboration with the countries of the southern hemisphere a sweeping educational project to that will receive financial and

technical support from agencies in the French-speaking nations and through bilateral cooperation.

The Commission is of the opinion that Québec, in its capacity as the second ranking partner in terms of the number of French-speakers after France, must assume broader leadership in international French-language bodies. Québec must also emphasize its know-how with respect to linguistic development and documentation. It is in Québec's interests to take advantage of its reputation and maintain a presence wherever cultural and linguistic diversity and the future of national languages are discussed.

Other languages in the Americas

One of the key issues of globalization is the survival of non-hegemonic languages and cultures. Underpinning this issue are respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of peoples, which enriches humankind, and respect for consumers to obtain in their language the goods and services offered to them. In the Americas, the languages that must be maintained are Spanish, Portuguese and, above all, French, which is facing a greater threat than certain other languages and must be protected by cooperation with Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries so that languages and cultures are shielded from the dictates of trade law. This strategy is all the more necessary since the commercial integration of the Americas in a free trade zone is becoming increasingly likely. The objective of this integration is the same as under NAFTA, i.e. to consolidate within a single economic space all countries in the Americas, without taking into account, at least until now, the cultural and social issues underpinning the notion of assembling in a single market countries with different cultures and disparate economic weight in which social conditions, especially wages, contrast sharply.

As for the structuring of Québec's language policy, the basic texts of the new organization must grant English, Spanish, Portuguese and French, the four languages of the Americas, the status of official languages; decree that trade in the new zone must take place in the four languages in order to impose the same constraints on all exporting firms; and guarantee the same protection to all consumers and avoid conflicts between national language policies and the free trade zone's policies. Moreover, the texts must guarantee the right of member States to adopt and apply specific cultural and linguistic policies, including the right to provide financial support for cultural production in their language(s).

8. Application of the comprehensive policy

Language planning in Québec at the beginning of the 21st century is clearly a multifaceted question that must progress on several fronts. To implement the language policy, whose innovative approach demands coherent action,

considerable consistency in the strategy employed and the coordination of human and financial resources, it is necessary to establish a pivotal agency to replace the Office de la langue française, the Conseil de la langue française, the Commission de protection de la langue française and the Commission de toponymie. The new agency would consolidate all functions related to the defence, maintenance, development, promotion and broadening of the influence of the French language, the official, common language of Québec. Strategy, the promotion of French, the organization of activities in society, partnership and the creation and dissemination of language-related materials will be the agency's hallmarks.

The Québec government will appoint the president of the new agency, who will have a five-year mandate, renewable once. A board of directors and seven individuals from the private sector appointed by the government, representing Québec society, will support the president.

The new agency will have seven branches:

a) the Direction générale linguistique, which will include a branch dedicated to the language in general and one branch dedicated to language for specific purposes;

b) the Direction générale de la francisation, which will include a workplace francization branch and a commerce and business francization branch;

c) the Direction générale des affaires juridiques;

d) the Direction des relations publiques, which will be responsible, among other things, for relations with Québec's English-speaking community;

e) the Direction de la recherche et des études;

f) the Direction de la toponymie;

g) the Direction de la gestion de l'organisme.

In addition to possessing university and professional qualifications, the agency's staff must be capable of overseeing Québec's language policy and must be representative of Québec society, especially in order to deal with Québec's English-speaking community and the Amerindian and Inuit nations.

A new procedure for handling complaints

The new approach also modifies procedures for ensuring compliance with language legislation. Complaints must be regarded as signs of a problem to be

resolved. Individuals who lodge complaints must be assured that the agency will take into consideration what they are indicating as an alleged offence and recognize that, if the complaint is well-founded, the problem may not be resolved immediately. Complaints may also lead to targeted sectoral initiatives covering a specific category of products according to a strategic plan, by priority sector. It has become obvious that complaints must not be handled one by one and accorded the same importance simply because a complaint has been lodged.

The Commission is of the opinion that the processing of complaints must be modified in order to distinguish between two separate phases, i.e. an information and reconciliation phase in the search for an effective way to comply with provisions in the legislation, during which are convened, depending on the nature of the offence, the individual or all of the stakeholders in a commercial sector. Should this process fail, the case will be submitted to a specialized tribunal of the Court of Québec with respect to offences pursuant to the *Charter of the French language*.

A new monitoring agency

The effectiveness of the new approach and its adaptation to the development of Québec's language problem must be monitored constantly. The Commission proposes the establishment of an interuniversity monitoring agency with a scientific board assembling all researchers interested in various facets of Québec's sociolinguistic situation.

An ongoing campaign

Globalization and immigration mean that Québec will develop increasingly against a backdrop of permanent linguistic competition. The French language and the policy pertaining to it, like culture and civic-mindedness, must be promoted in order to maintain public awareness of them.

Such a campaign must be conducted both in Québec and abroad. In Québec, it must emphasize the French language as a means of acquiring knowledge and a unique comparative advantage in light of the globalization of markets. Québec's language policy is all too often perceived abroad in a negative light. The business community and the media, in particular, know little about it. They do not seem to realize that some 25 American states also have a language policy, as does the Government of Canada. We must make them more aware of the policy and broaden awareness that Québec culture is part of the North American heritage and that it must be preserved. We must also reposition Québec as a centre for excellence and a place in which to learn French.

Conclusion

The situation has changed significantly in Québec since the adoption in the 20th century of the *Charter of the French language*. The old antagonism between French and English engendered by the interpretation of language policies has largely faded and the acceptance of the status quo seems to prevail. Everyone now acknowledges that French has become the language of participation in Québec society and the language of citizenship. More importantly, the quality of the language and its status are of concern to all Quebecers. This is a matter of pride and a question of adopting guarantees for original, effective participation in the community of the great cultures. Moreover, it explains the widespread determination to pay greater attention to the learning, mastery and quality of the French language in Québec, in all its diversity.

Québec is at the crossroads of the main cultural and linguistic currents. It is at the heart of the most innovative technological and industrial sites. It has at its disposal top-notch infrastructure and resources not only in French but also in English. It has, proportionally, the highest number of bilingual and trilingual citizens in Canada and in North America. Quebecers are more sure of themselves and wish to further acknowledge the pluralistic nature of their identity and learn other languages, thus acquiring new strengths that will enable them to develop as a French-speaking people in the Americas and in the world.